NPT CONF.2010/WP.36

2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

12 April 2010
English
Original: French

New York, 3-28 May 2010

Dismantling of the Pacific Testing Centre

Working paper submitted by France

France is the only nuclear-weapon State to have closed and dismantled, in an irreversible manner, its nuclear testing centre.

Cessation of nuclear testing

In 1996, France definitively ceased its nuclear testing. It immediately decided to fully dismantle the Pacific Testing Centre and the atolls of Mururoa and Fangataufa, located in the South Pacific.

Dismantlement

The dismantlement process began in 1996: infrastructures were knocked down, buildings that were no longer functional or that were likely to deteriorate quickly were destroyed, and clean-up operations were carried out in order to eliminate all radiological risks. In 1998, the dismantlement of the Pacific Testing Centre was completed. France can no longer carry out nuclear testing, and is the only nuclear-weapon State to have dismantled its testing site in a transparent and irreversible manner.

Monitoring the atolls

In 1998, a mission of international experts under the aegis of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) visited the sites. The mission concluded that the atolls did not pose any radiological risk to the Polynesian populations nor any geomechanical risk, and that no particular remediation or monitoring was necessary. France has nonetheless decided to continue monitoring the sites.

Support for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and monitoring of nuclear testing

France was the first nuclear-weapon State, together with the United Kingdom, to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (24 September 1996) and to ratify it (6 April 1998). At the international level, it actively supports the universal ratification and entry into force of the Treaty at the earliest possible date. On 24 and

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25 September 2009, France and Morocco co-chaired the so-called "Article XIV Conference" with a view to facilitating the entry into force of the Treaty.

France has participated substantively in setting up a Treaty verification system with the establishment of 16 monitoring stations on national territory, and eight international stations under bilateral cooperation agreements. Together with its European partners, France finances activities in such areas as training and enhancing the performance of the verification regime, and has provided over 5 million euros in technical assistance to third countries since 2006.

Action taken by the European Union

The disarmament plan of action, adopted in December 2008 during the French Presidency of the European Union, proposes:

- the universal ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the completion of its verification regime
- the dismantling, as soon as possible, of all nuclear testing facilities, in a manner that is transparent and open to the international community